

In the Specification:

Please insert the following after the title of the invention at page 1, line 3:

Cross-Reference to Related Applications

This is a submission pursuant to 35 U.S.C. 154(d)(4) to enter the national stage under 35 U.S.C. 371 for PCT/ES2005/000079, filed February 17, 2005. Priority is claimed under 35 U.S.C. 119(a) and 35 U.S.C. 365(b) to Spanish Patent No. P200400421 issued February 20, 2004. The subject matter of PCT/ ES2005/000079 and Spanish Patent No. P200400421 is hereby expressly incorporated herein by reference.

Please insert the following heading immediately before the paragraph beginning on page 1, line 4:

Field of the Invention

Please replace the paragraph beginning on page 1, line 4 with the following paragraph:

The invention relates to a process for producing pitches, in particular those suitable for use as carbon precursors, from coal tars and distillates thereof, ~~through a sequential and combined operation in three steps:~~

- ~~1. Reaction: Oxidative thermal treatment under mild conditions of pressure and temperature (<400° C, <10 bar g, residence time in the range of 2-10 seconds, and preferably 350-400° C, 5-10 bar g, 6-10 seconds), using air, oxygen, low-oxygen air or mixtures thereof as reagents.~~
- ~~2. Thermal treatment under inert atmosphere (340-400° C, <10 bar g, residence time in the range of 3-10 hours, and preferably 370-400° C, atmospheric pressure, 4-6 hours) for stabilization of the reaction product.~~
- ~~3. Fractional distillation (preferably in vacuum or by stripping with steam or inert gas) in order to adjust, according to the desired application, the softening point of the pitch or carbonaceous precursor.~~

Please insert the following paragraph at page 3, line 27, immediately before the heading “Description of the Invention”:

Brief Description of the Drawings

Figure 1 is a schematic illustration of a pilot plant in accordance with an embodiment of the present invention.

Please replace the paragraph and subsequent listing of elements beginning on page 6, line 6 with the following paragraph:

For carrying out the process according to the invention, it was used, though in no binding or limitative fashion, the pilot plant which scheme is illustrated in annexed Figure 1, ~~and in which the respective numerical references designate:~~ is shown a ~~1-Reactor (1), 2-Recirculation pumps (2), 3-Reagent dosing system (air/oxygen) (3), 4-Static mixer (4), 5-Oxygen analyzer (5), 6-Thermal treatment vessel (6), 7-Distillation column for softening point adjustment (7), 8-Pressure regulator (8), 9-Temperature regulators (9), 10-Heating systems (10), 11-Venting (11), 12-Anthracene oil inlet (12), 13-Purge (13), 14-Recirculation of unreacted anthracene oil (14), and 15-Pitch outlet (15).~~